

IT COULD BE 'FOUR-TWO-FOUR' SEASON AT LOAKES PARK

Happy Wanderers Roast The Pro's In The Kettering Try-Out

by 'Nova'

Kettering 1, Wycombe Wanderers 4

A START as explosive as ever made by Wycombe Wanderers and one that should serve as a violent warning to fellow amateurs. That's the verdict after the roasting they gave to a star-studded semi-professional Kettering team in a pre-season warm up on the Northamptonshire ground on Saturday.

It was little wonder then that newly appointed coach Don Welsh smiling broadly, should slap the backs of the happy Wanderers as they trooped off the field with the applause of twelve hundred spectators ringing in their ears.

Admittedly Kettering were a rather disjointed unit, but Don could afford to smile. He had just seen his first big plan—the four-two-four formation, come into action for the first time and work like a well-oiled machine. As the coach himself told me: "It is too soon for prophecies," but on the evidence of just this one showing, it is obvious that the tide is turning for the better.

The experience gained by the majority of players over the past three and four hard and barren seasons combined with the new plan looks like producing a most satisfactory result.

The plan itself is simple. "I decided upon the four-two-four formation so as to make best use of all our best players strong points," said Don.

BANG-ON BASSETT

With this new formation last season's deficiency in attack is less noticeable. Indeed on Saturday the deficiency was non-existent. This was due in no small way to the skill and energy of the four forwards but especially to a new find—18 years old inside forward Dave Bassett from Hayes.

He scored two fine goals and made another for Jimmy Hay. But Dave is not only a goalscorer. He worked hard in midfield and combined with his forward colleagues, Len Worley, Roger Jackson and Jimmy Hay.

He was making a formidable two-some with Tony Horseman until the injury bogey struck its first blow of the season after only eleven minutes. Then last year's leading goalscorer, fell awkwardly on his left arm and was taken off the field with a dislocated elbow. Jimmy Hay came on as a substitute.

Only minutes before Horseman had been jumping with delight at scoring Wycombe's first goal of the season after a neat pass from Len Worley. Kettering did equalise minutes later through former Hitchin centre-forward Dennis Randall, but then Wycombe took complete control and easily contained the "name" players in the Kettering forward line.

Alistair Lewis making his return in Wycombe's colour after a year's absence showed no signs of rustiness and completely shut out ex-Leicester winger Derek Hogg while George Pullin did as well against Harry Hooper.

The defensive set-up was ably completed by Phil Patrick, who seems to have started where he left off—in brilliant form, Charlie Gale, captain for the day, and new pivot Peter Roystone. Roystone showed up well and proved that he is a classier,

if not stronger centre-half than John Fisher.

These players provide such cover for each other so that no matter how Kettering weaved patterns, they could get nowhere. But what must have been most perplexing for them was to find that Dave Thomas, wearing the No. 9, was rarely in the centre-forward position. Along with John Beck, he provided the link between attack and defence. And how superbly they both did their job.

Beck revelled in the freedom he was given, knowing that he did not have to worry about marking a winger, as was his job last season. It was these two players who engineered Wycombe's second goal after 17 minutes. They enabled Bassett to coolly walk past goalkeeper Harry Smethurst and push the ball into the net.

The third goal just before half-time was an excellent example of how the 4-2-4 worked. Kettering attacked stoutly for some minutes, but Wycombe's four "wa's" stayed upfield. Suddenly the ball came out of the defence to Len Worley who moved quickly upfield and found he had three colleagues to pass to and only two defenders to contend with.

The ball went to the unmarked Bassett, who scored easily.

Wycombe made a change at the interval bringing on Dave Worley for John Beck. This gave Worley a chance to settle down and get used to the system in view of Beck's absence on Saturday, when he will be playing for the Isthmian league.

ANOTHER GOAL

Dave Worley took over the defensive role and Charlie Gale moved to link man with Thomas, but it made little difference to the state of the game. Wycombe remained on top, in fact increasing their lead through Jimmy Hay, after Bassett had stormed through the defence.

Kettering did make a late rally and Pullin cleared off the line and a header and shot both hit the woodwork, but the four man defence plus the two link men retained their poise and the reputation which they had built up in those preceding minutes.

Kettering, despite the inclusion of well-known players were clearly shocked by the fitness, speed and skill of these "mere amateurs". As a Kettering reporter quietly murmured, "We expect amateurs to be more enthusiastic—but not more skilful."

Well here was the perfect combination of enthusiasm and skill. Now we must see if this high standard which the players and coach have set themselves, can be maintained.

If it can the crowds should soon be flocking back to their places on the Loakes Park terraces.

Kettering: P. Patrick; A. Lewis, G. Pullin; J. Beck (D. Worley), P. Roystone, C. Gale; L. Worley, T. Horseman (J. Hay), D. Thomas, D. Bassett, R. Jackson.